



MEDIA OUTREACH



PROMOTE RECOVERY MONTH WITH EVENTS

**“I CAME TO THE DECISION
THAT IF I WASN’T GOING
TO DIE, THEN I WAS SET ON
FINDING A WAY TO LIVE.”**

— LISA

Every September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (www.samhsa.gov), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (www.hhs.gov), sponsors **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** to increase awareness of behavioral health conditions. This observance promotes the belief that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover from mental and/or substance use disorders.

Organizing an event for **Recovery Month** is an ideal way to celebrate the achievements of the recovery community. It is also a great way to support this year’s theme, “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!*” Events bring people together to share real life experiences of the power of recovery from mental and/or substance use disorders.

This document will help guide your event-planning process and provide tips and instructions for how to publicize events to maximize attendance.

DEFINE GOALS...

Before planning your event, consider the criteria that will make it a success. Setting goals will help determine the type of event you host, as well as inform what messages will resonate with the attendees. Possible goals include:

- Spread knowledge and awareness about mental and/or substance use disorders and prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- Promote the implementation of prevention, treatment, and recovery support programs in your community.
- Inspire others to champion recovery as possible and attainable.
- Secure coverage in the media, blogs, or social media platforms to reach those who cannot attend an event or to continue the conversation.

CHOOSE THE EVENT TYPE...

Events can come in all forms and sizes. The following are types of events that may be of interest:

- **Proclamation signing:** A proclamation is an official announcement by a public official, usually a political figure. The signing gathers people together to generate enthusiasm and awareness for a common cause. By declaring September **Recovery Month**, public officials can alert members of the community that prevention, treatment, and recovery support services are available and that mental and/or substance use disorders are significant issues affecting communities nationwide.
- **Walk, run, or rally:** A walk, run, or rally can draw large crowds of all ages and backgrounds, fostering a celebratory community atmosphere. These events can be sponsored by local businesses and organizations dedicated to mental and/or substance use disorders. Walks or runs often consist of pre-determined lengths and routes, with social opportunities intermingled, while rallies may identify speakers and opportunities to speak with members of the recovery community.
- **Cookout, dinner, or picnic:** Cookouts, dinners, or picnics are easy ways to unite friends, family, and neighbors in a positive environment. These events can be tailored to encourage treatment, celebrate recovery, or support a person's reintegration into society.
- **Public garden, artwork, or memorial dedication:** These types of events gather community members to dedicate a public landmark or item to serve as a lasting reminder of recovery. At the dedication, a local government

official can speak about the community's commitment to investing in prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. Other community members with personal recovery experiences can share their inspiring stories.

- **Twitter chat, webinar, or Google Hangout:**

Technology allows people to participate in the online discussion surrounding recovery. These types of events are convenient when you are discussing the role of online services in recovery, such as e-therapy and support chat rooms.

- **Forums or discussion groups:** Forums and discussion groups are cost-effective and informal ways to bring members of the community together to address local interests. When planning these events, consider engaging civic leaders and elected officials to participate. These events can take place in a variety of settings—for example, a provider's office or treatment center, community center, or a place of worship. Attendees should be prepared to engage in a two-way conversation about local issues centered on prevention, treatment, and recovery.

- **Other types of events:** No event is too small to celebrate the accomplishments of individuals in recovery and those who serve them. Be sure to have information on how to get help for mental and/or substance use disorders readily available for event attendees.

PLAN THE EVENT...

When planning a **Recovery Month** event, consider the following checklist.

- **Form a planning committee:** The first step for a successful event involves forming a planning committee. It ensures that the workload is divided evenly among volunteers, staff, and partner organizations. It also encourages the exchange of ideas. The number of committee members depends on the size and scope of the event. A committee leader should convene the committee regularly to create a timeline and develop goals for the event.
- **Determine a budget:** Adhering to a budget is crucial. Deciding on a budget early will inform critical decision making about the size, shape, scope, and promotion of the event. Other items involved in the budget include fundraising costs, food and entertainment, venue and equipment rentals, permits and licenses, invitations, and speaker fees.
- **Plan logistics:** Select the event date, time, and venue as soon as possible after budget approval. When choosing a location, remember to select a venue that is accessible and appropriate for the type of event and size of the audience. Ask the venue contacts if permits or licenses are required.



MORE THAN ONE THIRD

OF YOUNG ADULTS AGED 18 TO 25 WERE BINGE ALCOHOL USERS (37.7%). AN ESTIMATED 8.7 MILLION (22.8%) OF UNDERAGE PERSONS (AGED 12 TO 20) WERE CURRENT DRINKERS IN 2014.

Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Behavioral Health Trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, NSDUH Series H-50, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 15-4927. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015, p. 1.

If the event is in a public location, contact local authorities to confirm the steps that are needed to meet local requirements. When selecting a date and time, consider other events that are occurring in the area to minimize conflicts. Use the following tools to help streamline the search process:

- Search for already scheduled local events on www.recoverymonth.gov by typing in a zip code in the “Community Events” page. When a date is finalized, post the event on the **Recovery Month** website.
- Check event postings in a local newspaper’s community calendar, which is often housed on its website. Go to www.charityhappenings.org to view a master calendar of nonprofit events, galas, and benefits.
- **Find a sponsor or partner:** Hosting an event can be expensive, but partnering with local organizations, television networks, or small businesses can help offset the cost in exchange for publicity. Support from partners or sponsors may come in the form of money, broadcast coverage, marketing, catering, printing, giveaways, or other significant expenditures. In addition, local mental illness and/or addiction treatment and recovery centers can provide volunteers from the recovery community to staff an event. The **Recovery Month** Planning Partners are local organizations an event planner can potentially collaborate with to garner support, attendees, and/or speakers for an event. The **Recovery Month** Planning Partners are instrumental in spreading the message that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover. For more information about **Recovery Month** Planning Partners, visit www.recoverymonth.gov/planning-partners.
- **Implement a publicity plan:** Successful events will employ both online and traditional means of increasing awareness about an event. Some necessary outreach may involve developing flyers, banners (print and online), and advertisements, as well as using social media to start a dialogue about the event. Print or broadcast journalists, as well as bloggers, can help increase the credibility of an event. Refer to the “Work with the Media” section in this toolkit for more information on garnering publicity for an event and speaking with the media. Be sure to brand your event as a **Recovery Month** event by placing the official **Recovery Month** logo on your printed materials. Such logos can be accessed and downloaded from www.recoverymonth.gov.
- **Post your event on the **Recovery Month** website:** Promote your event by posting it on www.recoverymonth.gov under the events section. By doing this, you can let others know the date, time, location, and other details about your event. You can also use this posting as a publicity tool by sharing your event on social media platforms.
- **Remember last-minute details:** Hold a final planning meeting in the days leading up to the event. Call vendors and speakers to confirm reservations and attendance. If possible, set up any booths or multimedia equipment the day before, and plan to arrive early the day of the event in case of any unexpected issues.
- **Develop a back-up plan:** Successful events have contingency plans in place. If the event location is outdoors, always plan a back-up indoor space, or a well-publicized rain date.



EVALUATE...

Once the event concludes, take time to review lessons learned from the event. A questionnaire is helpful to record feedback from attendees, and follow-up messages by email or social media may elicit audience response following the event. Staff insights are also critical to inform successes and areas to improve on for future events.

After the event, take the opportunity to thank event staff, volunteers, and community leaders for participating by handwriting thank-you letters or posting a thank-you letter to a blog or website.

Be sure to send any event promotional materials to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov and start to brainstorm for next year's **Recovery Month** event!

SHARE...

SAMHSA wants to hear about all of the events held in honor of **Recovery Month** this year. Once an event takes place, visit www.recoverymonth.gov to post details, photos, or materials from the event. The **Recovery Month** Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RecoveryMonth), YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/RecoveryMonth), and Twitter account (www.twitter.com/RecoveryMonth) also serve as platforms to which event planners or attendees can post details about their experiences. More information about these online tools can be found by visiting the "Social Media Tools" section in the **Recovery Month** website for details.

Inclusion of websites and resources in this document and on the **Recovery Month** website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

WORK WITH THE MEDIA

Building relationships with members of the media is essential to the success of **Recovery Month**. Media outreach and the resulting coverage will increase awareness of events and highlight community efforts focused on mental and/or substance use disorders. The term “media” refers to the mass means of communication that reach many people through different channels including broadcast, print, web, and other social media platforms.

This document includes the basics of media outreach, including tips on speaking with the media and creating long-term relationships.

DETERMINE A FOCUS...

To begin, it is important to differentiate your **Recovery Month** event from other activities in the area since members of the media receive many requests to attend and cover events.

When determining the focus of your media outreach, use the following factors to increase your chances of coverage:

- **Hot topics:** In the crowded news space, a fresh, timely, and relevant angle will ensure that an event is considered. Check out healthcare trends, such as new research or policies, which may be driving the conversation in the news or on blogs.
- **Local impact:** Research compelling and current statistics that illustrate the prevalence of mental and/or substance use disorders, both locally and nationally. For example, the “Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders: Fast Facts” section of the toolkit features relevant behavioral health facts. You can use this information to create and supplement a localized fact sheet, outlining the effect of mental and/or substance use disorders in your area.
- **Proximity:** Media outlets have less money to spend on staffing and travel, so make sure you are contacting the most appropriate outlet and person. When reaching out to media, emphasize the direct connection of the event to the local community, such as the appearance of a local official.
- **Timeliness:** When contacting reporters, take into account how frequently their publications are distributed. Many reporters may request an advance lead time to write about an event before their publications go to print. Other reporters, such as those for broadcast outlets, may only cover “breaking news” live at the event site.

RESEARCH...

After establishing the key, newsworthy aspects of your event, identify the appropriate outlets and reporters to contact. To find out who has covered topics related to mental and/or substance use disorders, set up Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts) online, which notify you when news on a certain topic is published.

ORGANIZE...

It is helpful to keep your media contacts’ information organized and accessible. Media lists are best created in a spreadsheet database program. Once you have identified a potential contact, include the following information in your spreadsheet:

- Contact name and title
- Contact outlet
- Email
- Phone number
- Facebook page and Twitter handle
- Pertinent notes (e.g., preferred time and method of contact, previous articles on recovery topics, and remarks from your interactions with this person)

CONNECT...

Once the list is complete, reach out to reporters via phone or email, depending on each contact’s individual preferences. Reporters often have time limitations, so keep the message short when “pitching” the event. Refer to the end of this document for sample pitches and phone scripts.

Bloggers tend to respond to people they have engaged with previously, so it may be beneficial to send an introductory email to the blogger to break the ice and start developing a relationship. Once a relationship is established, follow up with details of your **Recovery Month** event.

Likewise, when “pitching” reporters, start with an introduction and then ask about their availability. Don’t be discouraged if a journalist is short with you or in a hurry. Instead, offer to call back at a different time or connect with a colleague who may be interested in talking about the event.

After the conversation, thank each media contact for his or her time, exchange contact information, and set expectations for potential follow-up. Also, offer to send event materials (such as a promotional flyer) for further details. Confirm by email or phone if they will attend.

INTERVIEW...

Reporters who cover an event may request an interview with the host, a speaker, or key member of the host organization. If your team is presented with an opportunity to be interviewed by a member of the media, prepare for the discussion in advance. Research the interested media contact and anticipate the types of questions that may be asked. To best answer the questions, familiarize yourself with the event and all supplementary materials. Finally, practice answering questions with a friend or colleague.

The day before the interview, confirm the logistics and anticipated length of the interview. Whether your interview will be in-person or on the phone, always be professional and polite. Keep in mind that the goal of the interview is to communicate **Recovery Month** key messages, event details, and describe the importance of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in the local area.

The following tips may also be useful in an interview:

- **Bridging:** This technique allows you to stay on message and avoid answering questions that may steer the conversation to unanticipated areas. Instead of answering the question head on, find a component of the question that can be tied back to one of the main points. For example, you may say, "That's a great example of the power of recovery..." and then give a main talking point about recovery.
- **Bundling:** This technique allows a person to state a key point and then explain their justification for making the point. For example, a key message may include the phrase, "SAMHSA has a series of initiatives that improve prevention, treatment, and recovery support services." This would be followed by important follow-up points that back up the key message, such as: "**Recovery Month** supports these initiatives by..."
- **Blocking:** If a reporter asks you a question that you are uncomfortable answering, avoid saying "no comment," as it may appear you are hiding something. Instead, offer to put the reporter in contact with someone who can accurately answer the question. For example, "I am not the best person to answer that question, however I can put you in contact with a local organization who can provide the information."

For a successful in-person interview, remember to maintain eye contact, sit up straight, control hand movements, demonstrate enthusiasm and genuine feelings in your voice, and dress professionally. For a successful phone interview, be sure to prepare by rehearsing and drafting notes. Find a quiet place to hold the call, convey a friendly tone in your voice, and ask follow-up questions if needed.

PRACTICE...

When speaking with the media, it may be helpful to use the following talking points about **Recovery Month**, which can be specific to an event.

For a specific event: On **[Date]** at **[Time]**, **[Organization]** is hosting **[Event or Activity]** at **[Location]** to celebrate recovery and encourage individuals with a mental and/or substance use disorder to seek treatment and achieve a healthy, happy life. Mental and/or substance use disorders can affect anyone, including people in **[City]**, where **[Number]** people have a mental health and/or a substance use disorder. Our community must remain vigilant and dedicated to the recovery process by helping people address these preventable and treatable conditions, and support individuals in recovery, as well as their family members.

To promote *Recovery Month*: **[Organization]**'s activities are part of **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**, which is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This year, **[Organization]** will be observing **Recovery Month** by **[Include the name and brief description of your Recovery Month activities]**.

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The following templates should not quote any SAMHSA official directly or add any content that could be potentially misconstrued as an official SAMHSA pronouncement.

SAMPLE PITCH EMAIL

Subject Line of Email: Main topic of your email

Hello **[Name]**,

I recently noticed your article on **[Behavioral Health Topic]**, and I thought you may be interested in an upcoming event celebrating people in recovery from mental and/or substance use disorders. In our community, behavioral health issues affect many people: **[Insert statistic on local prevalence of mental and/or substance use disorders]**. On **[Event Date]**, **[Name of Host Organization and any Noteworthy Attendees]** will host **[Type of Event]** in the **[City/Town Name]** area as part of ***National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)***, a large national observance. This event increases awareness and understanding of mental and/or substance use disorders, and promotes the message that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

Recovery Month is an annual celebration sponsored each September by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Included in this message is a media advisory that provides additional details of the event. Please feel free to contact me if you need further information or would like to schedule an interview with **[Name and Title of Person Being Offered for Interviews]**. I will follow up with you prior to the **[Event]** to see if you or someone from your organization will be attending.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

[Your Name and Contact Information]

SAMPLE PITCH CALL SCRIPT

Hi **[Name]**,

My name is **[Insert Name]**, and I am calling on behalf of **[Name of Organization]**. An upcoming event in our community will emphasize the seriousness of mental and/or substance use disorders. Do you still cover **[Reporter's Beat – Health Care, Community Events, etc.]** and have a moment to chat?

As you may know, mental and/or substance use disorders are common, and not everyone receives the support they need to get better. **[Insert Local Prevalence Statistics to Support the Local Community Impact]**. Despite the prevalence of these conditions, recovery from mental and/or substance use disorders is possible.

We are hosting an event on **[Date]** in **[City]** as part of ***National Recovery Month***, an annual observance sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The goals of the event are to increase awareness and understanding of mental and/or substance use disorders, and promote the message that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

If you are interested in learning more about the event, or are interested in speaking with **[Spokesperson Name and Role]**, I also have additional information I can send you. Is your email address **[Email Address]**?

Please let me know if you have any additional questions. My contact information will be included in the email, and I will follow up prior to the **[Event]** to see if you or someone from your organization will be attending.

Thank you for your time, and I hope to speak with you again soon.

USE OP-EDS AND ONLINE ARTICLES

People's opinions are often shaped by what they read in the media, whether in newspapers or online. The media is a powerful mechanism for spreading information, and placing an op-ed or bylined piece in a print or online media outlet can help raise awareness about **Recovery Month**. An op-ed, short for “opposite the editorial pages” of a newspaper, is a way to express opinions and perspectives on a certain subject or initiative. Writing about **Recovery Month** in any publication can promote understanding of mental and/or substance use disorders in your community, town, city, territory, or state.

This document includes helpful tips on how to write an op-ed or online article and how to submit it for publication.

GET STARTED...

The 2016 **Recovery Month** theme, “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!*” highlights the value of peer support by educating, mentoring, and helping others. It invites individuals in recovery and their support systems to be change agents in communities, and in civic and advocacy engagements.

Think about this theme when you brainstorm ideas for your op-ed or online article. Also consider the purpose of **Recovery Month**—to spread the message that behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

Plan appropriately and start writing early to place your op-ed or opinion piece—either in print or online—during **Recovery Month**. Refer to the checklist below to stay on track:

- **Determine a clear and concise message:** A strong op-ed or online article persuasively makes a single point or argument in the beginning of the piece. Explain topics through simple messaging, allowing readers to stay focused and walk away with the main point.
- **Think relevance:** Make the subject of an op-ed or article timely and relevant to the general public. Consider tying your piece to a recent event or news story.
- **Personalize it:** Include a personal story to help readers easily connect with the message. Be sure to ask for permission before sharing someone's personal story.
- **Locate statistics and facts:** Validate all statements or opinions with hard facts. For example, if you want to note that mental and/or substance use disorders are common and more prevalent than one might think, include statistics on the prevalence. Refer to the “Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders: Fast Facts” section of this toolkit to identify relevant statistics.
- **Think local:** Give the article a local angle to increase chances that a print or online outlet will publish the piece. Feature local residents in your op-ed or article—given they have granted you permission beforehand. You can also address recent local events, and include statistics that are specific to your city or state.
- **Keep it brief:** Op-ed or online articles should be between 400 and 750 words. Check with publications to determine specific limitations on word count or other requirements, such as deadlines and how they prefer to receive submissions.
- **Identify the appropriate publication(s):** Assess which publication is the best fit for a particular op-ed. A local newspaper might be ideal if the article focuses on community issues. If the article focuses on a broader, national issue, try a newspaper with a higher circulation rate. Remember that most publications will not publish op-eds that were already published in another outlet. For this reason, prioritize each outlet and select your top choices, followed by back-up options. Read examples of past op-eds to get a sense of what formats and topics appear to capture the publication's interest.
- **Create a relationship:** The best way to have your thoughts published or posted is to develop a relationship with the editor in advance. Always plan out what you want to say before contacting the publication. Provide background information about yourself, your organization, and **Recovery Month**, in addition to any local and state recovery issues.
- **Refer to the template:** Consult the sample op-ed at the end of this document to help initiate the writing process.

To gain additional attention for your op-ed, contact well-known organizations in the community and offer to co-write an op-ed or online article with them. An established partner might catch the eye of an editor and increase the chances that your op-ed is published. Refer to the “Treatment and Recovery Support Services” section of this toolkit to identify organizations that you can collaborate with in your area.



WRITE...

Select a topic and statistics with a local angle to support your information about **Recovery Month** and its mission, along with this year's theme. Avoid controversial statements or imposing beliefs on others, but do take a clear position. Also, consider the publication's readers when writing an op-ed or online article, and think about what would catch their attention and create interest in **Recovery Month**. If you feature or mention any prevention, treatment and/or recovery programs in your community, make sure you have their permission first.

Refer to the following tips when writing an op-ed or online article.

- Include an eye-catching title that emphasizes central messaging.
- Make it personal and include real stories to connect with readers.
- Restate your main points at the end of the op-ed and issue a call to action.
- Avoid technical jargon and acronyms—most newspapers are written at a fifth-grade level.
- Include your name, contact information, and a description of who you are and your qualifications at the end of the piece.

PERSONALIZE...

Refer to the resources below for facts to make an op-ed or online article more compelling.

- **SAMHSA's Recovery Statement** (blog.samhsa.gov/2012/03/23/definition-of-recovery-updated)
- **SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health** (www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh)
- **SAMHSA's National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/substance-abuse-facilities-data-nssats)
- **SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set** (www.samhsa.gov/data/client-level-data-teds)
- **SAMHSA's Drug Abuse Warning Network** (www.samhsa.gov/data/emergency-department-data-dawn)
- **Mental Health Facilities Data (NMHSS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/mental-health-facilities-data-nmhss)
- **SAMHSA's Publication Store** (store.samhsa.gov)
- **SAMHSA's Recovery and Recovery Support Webpage** (www.samhsa.gov/recovery)

PUBLISH...

When submitting an op-ed or online article, include a brief cover letter to establish why you are qualified to write the piece and why it is timely, along with a simple explanation of why recovery from mental and/or substance use disorders is important to readers. When trying to place your piece in a publication or online, be sure to:

- **Place a follow-up call:** Follow up with the editor one week after submitting the op-ed or article. If he or she has not had time to look at it yet, follow up again one week later. Remember to be polite and state that publishing your piece will help others who may not be aware of the seriousness of mental and/or substance use disorders and the possibility of recovery.
- **Set a time limit:** Since most publications will not send notification if an op-ed is rejected, set a deadline for your piece to be published. If the deadline passes, move on to the next outlet and gauge their interest in publishing the piece. Don't give up!

If your op-ed is rejected from your desired publications, consider alternatives to the traditional printed op-ed. Ask the publication's website editor if op-eds can be posted on the online version of the newspaper. Online opinion pieces can be much easier to share with others through social media outlets, such as Twitter (www.twitter.com) and Facebook (www.facebook.com).

Also consider that many newspapers have online bloggers who cover local philanthropic events, and some may accept guest post contributions to discuss mental and/or substance use disorders or a **Recovery Month** event in your area. Use the sample op-ed at the end of this document as a guide for a guest post, but remember to write in a more casual, personal manner when blogging. If a blogger does not agree to a guest post, offer information about **Recovery Month** and prevention, treatment, and recovery of mental and/or substance use disorders, and encourage the blogger to write his or her own post on the topic or link to a local **Recovery Month** event's website.

Keep in mind that **Recovery Month** celebrates individuals in long-term recovery; acknowledges those who provide prevention, treatment, and recovery support services; and empowers those in need of help to seek treatment throughout the year. Even if your op-ed or online piece does not get published in September, keep trying throughout the rest of the year to help spread these crucial messages.

SHARE...

SAMHSA is interested in receiving copies of published op-eds and hearing about any successes in promoting **Recovery Month**. Be sure to check news sites such as Google News (<https://news.google.com>) or Yahoo News (news.yahoo.com) to see if an op-ed is published or whether other outlets have picked it up. Posting on personal social media accounts is also a great way to share an op-ed. In particular, you can do the following:

- Post a published op-ed on the **Recovery Month** website (www.recoverymonth.gov), Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RecoveryMonth) and Twitter account (twitter.com/recoverymonth).
- Visit the "Social Media Tools" section on the **Recovery Month** website (www.recoverymonth.gov/events/plan-events/social-media-tools) for assistance on how to use these online tools.
- Distribute event details, materials, and pictures to the social media channels above.

Send a copy of your published op-ed and placement information electronically to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov or by mail to:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration
ATTN: Consumer Affairs/**Recovery Month**
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
5600 Fishers Lane
13E33-B
Rockville, MD 20857

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SAMPLE OP-ED

Families and Communities Can Make a Difference

Oftentimes, individuals who experience a mental and/or substance use disorder feel isolated and alone. Yet, every year millions of Americans experience these conditions. It's important that we offer support to individuals facing mental and/or substance use disorders. In fact, we need to create environments and relationships that promote acceptance. Support from families is essential to recovery, so it's important that family members have the tools to start conversations about prevention, treatment, and recovery. Too many people are still unaware that prevention works and that mental and/or substance use disorders can be treated, just like other health problems.

Having **[Been in Long-term Recovery for XX Years / Worked in the Recovery Field for XX years / Other Statement of Personal Experience]**, I have witnessed the positive reality of recovery. Individuals who embrace recovery achieve improved mental and physical health, as well as form stronger relationships with their neighbors, family members, and peers. We need to make more people feel like recovery is possible.

Mental and/or substance use disorders affect people of all ethnicities, ages, genders, geographic regions, and socioeconomic levels. They need to know that help is available. These individuals can get better, both physically and emotionally, with the support of a welcoming community.

Families and communities can find hope and spread the message that recovery works by celebrating the annual **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**, an initiative sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

[Name of Organization] is celebrating **Recovery Month** by holding a variety of educational and entertaining events **[Or Name Specific Event]** to honor individuals and families who are in long-term recovery. Your attendance will demonstrate the support of the recovery community, including those who provide prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

I urge all community members to join the celebration and help stem the incidence of mental and/or substance use disorders. Let people know that free, confidential help is available 24 hours a day through SAMHSA's National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** or **1-800-487-4889 (TDD)**. Additionally, you can provide information about local treatment and recovery resources on your website and link to additional information available at www.recoverymonth.gov.

Offering support to those experiencing mental and/or substance use disorders can make a huge difference. Together we can help others realize the promise of recovery and give families the right support to help their loved ones.

[Include Author Name, Title, and Brief Summary of Qualifications that Make Him or Her an Expert on this Topic.]



AMONG PEOPLE AGED 12 OR OLDER, **21.5 MILLION PEOPLE (8.1%)** WERE CLASSIFIED WITH **SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCE OR ABUSE** IN THE PAST YEAR.

Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Behavioral Health Trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, NSDUH Series H-50, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 15-4927. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015, p. 2.

PRESS MATERIALS FOR YOUR RECOVERY MONTH EVENT

To assist with the effort and generate positive publicity for **Recovery Month** activities, create and distribute press materials to spread the recovery message. These materials should garner media coverage by highlighting the fact that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover from mental and/or substance use disorders.

The 2016 **Recovery Month** theme, “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!*” highlights the importance of families, communities, and individuals sharing stories of recovery to encourage others to make a personal connection with the recovery movement. Use this document to guide the development and distribution of publicity materials to promote **Recovery Month** events this September and throughout the year.

CHOOSE A FORMAT...

There are several types of materials you or your organization can share with the media to publicize your **Recovery Month** event and highlight messages that will resonate with your intended audiences and the media.

The following tools will build awareness for a **Recovery Month** event. Examples of most of these tools can be found at the end of this document and can be modified to distribute to media outlets.

- **Press releases**, or news releases, are one- or two-page announcements sent to the media so they will cover a story or event. A release is similar to a condensed news story, which sometimes is repurposed as a stand-alone article in a newspaper. Refer to the “Work with the Media” section in this toolkit for factors that reporters use to determine if a story is newsworthy. Press releases should:
 - Be approximately 500 words, formatted in short paragraphs;
 - Contain the most important information at the top, followed by supporting details later in the article; and
 - Include a quote from an event’s spokesperson or key figure.
- **Backgrounders** are succinct, supplementary documents that often accompany a media advisory or news release. A backgrounder may also be distributed at **Recovery Month** events, or sent to reporters separately. They can be written in paragraph form or have bulleted information. Create a backgrounder, such as the one at the end of this document, that highlights SAMHSA and **Recovery Month**; your organization; the specific event; recent behavioral health data; relevant prevention, treatment, and recovery support services; and local individuals in recovery.
- **Op-eds**, or opposite of the editorials, provide an opinion on a specific topic or event, and are published opposite a publication’s editorial page. An op-ed’s purpose is to influence public opinion by taking a strong position and creating a dialogue about issues affecting a community, such as mental and/or substance use disorders.
- **Media advisories**, or media alerts, are brief one-page documents that notify the media of an upcoming event and provide essential information about the event’s date, time, and location. They are brief and entice reporters to attend the event to learn more. Advisories should be sent to the calendar editor of a local newspaper and also the health care reporter or editor that covers local news or events. They should also include the organization’s contact information, as well as information on scheduling interviews and taking photos.

- **Letters to the editor** are brief letters (no more than 150 to 175 words) written to express an individual's or organization's point of view on a particular, yet timely, subject that was recently covered in the news. Letters should be written as a response to another news story (within a couple of days of the story's appearance) and should highlight a timely issue, such as how the rate of mental and/or substance use disorders in a local community factors into other stories in the news. Letters to the editor tend to be published in newspapers and news magazines.
- **Public service announcements (PSAs)** are non-paid informational commercials, distributed to local radio or television outlets. PSAs create awareness of **Recovery Month** in communities and help inform audiences about the realities of mental and/or substance use disorders. Refer to the "**Recovery Month** Public Service Announcements" section in this toolkit for more information.

DRAFT...

When drafting press materials for a **Recovery Month** event, explain why behavioral health issues are important to address and why your event is beneficial to the community. Remember to share these messages with all members of your event-planning committee, in order for them to offer a relevant quote if asked by the media. It may be helpful to review the "Work with the Media" section for more advice on interacting with reporters.

When developing press materials, keep in mind the following tips.

- Avoid using slang terms, which may offend people in recovery or technical jargon that the general public may not understand.
- Double-check the names, titles, and contact information in press materials, and verify that all statistics and spelling are correct.

PERSONALIZE...

Use the following resources to customize your press materials with local data when possible.

- **SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health** (www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh)
- **SAMHSA's National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/substance-abuse-facilities-data-nssats)
- **SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set** (www.samhsa.gov/data/client-level-data-teds)

- **SAMHSA's Drug Abuse Warning Network** (www.samhsa.gov/data/emergency-department-data-dawn)
- **SAMHSA's Mental Health Facilities Data (NMHSS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/mental-health-facilities-data-nmhss)
- **SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatments and Services Webpage** (www.samhsa.gov/treatment)
- **SAMHSA's Recovery and Recovery Support Webpage** (www.samhsa.gov/recovery)

DISSEMINATE...

Before distributing the media materials you have developed, make sure your materials adequately highlight the importance of **Recovery Month**, have a specific call to action, and provide community-specific information.

Press materials are most commonly distributed electronically. To ensure a reporter views the press materials, copy and paste the information into the body of an email. Make sure the headline and first paragraph are readable to prevent unnecessary scrolling. Also, personalize each email so the reporter knows it is not a mass message.

To learn where to send materials and how to build a comprehensive media list, refer to the "Work with the Media" section in this toolkit.

COORDINATE TIMING...

Media advisories are typically sent to reporters about a week in advance of an event. Remember, these alerts serve as an invitation or "save-the-date" for the event. Press releases are distributed either immediately before or at the event, or can be given to reporters under an "embargo" agreement until the event or announcement becomes official.

To distribute materials to a large number of recipients, you can send them to a news wire service organization, such as the Associated Press or Reuters, which may choose to run them for free. You can also choose to use an online fee-based distribution service, such as:

- **24/7 Press Release** (www.24-7pressrelease.com)
- **Business Wire** (www.businesswire.com/portal/site/home)
- **PR Log** (www.prlog.org)
- **PR Newswire** (www.prnewswire.com)



Once materials have been distributed, remember to post them on the **Recovery Month** website at www.recoverymonth.gov and link to the materials on appropriate web-based platforms. It is also important to follow up with each reporter who received the materials to ensure they received them and gauge their interest in attending the event or scheduling an interview with a spokesperson or speaker. Refer to the “Work with the Media” section in this toolkit for tips on pitching and advice on communicating with journalists.

SHARE...

As discussed in the “Promote **Recovery Month** with Events” section in this toolkit, it is important to evaluate an event after it has taken place. The planning committee can use key lessons learned from an event to improve future events.

Post press materials on the **Recovery Month** website (www.recoverymonth.gov) to accompany the event listing.

Share event information through **Recovery Month** social media outlets, such as the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RecoveryMonth), YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/recoverymonth), and Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/RecoveryMonth>). Share the event’s outreach efforts and talk about the materials that were useful during **Recovery Month** by completing the “Customer Satisfaction Form.”

Send promotional materials electronically to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov or by mail to:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration
ATTN: Consumer Affairs/**Recovery Month**
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
5600 Fishers Lane
13E33-B
Rockville, MD 20857

CONSULT RESOURCES...

For more information on **Recovery Month** and services available to people in need, please refer to the “Treatment and Recovery Support Services” section of this toolkit.

Inclusion of websites and event examples in this document and on the **Recovery Month** website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

[Adapt as needed for event by modifying the type of event, date, etc.]

The following templates should not quote any SAMHSA official directly or add any content that could potentially be misconstrued as an official SAMHSA announcement.

[Name of Official] to Issue Proclamation and Lead Recovery Event to Raise Awareness of Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders

Mental and/or substance use disorders are prevalent in our community, and it's imperative that individuals in **[City or State]** understand how to seek help. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in 2015, an estimated XX **[Thousand/Million]** people in **[City or State]** were affected by mental illness. In addition, an estimated XX **[Thousand/Million]** people in **[City or State]** were affected by substance use disorders.

To address this significant problem, **[Name of Official]** will issue a proclamation for ***National Recovery Month*** this September, raising awareness about prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in the area. Additionally, **[Name of Expert]** will discuss local mental and/or substance use disorder programs and highlight individuals who are in recovery, detailing the journey they took to get where they are today.

Last year, 82 proclamations were issued nationwide, including one by the President of the United States. After the signing of the proclamation, attendees and all citizens of **[City or State]** are encouraged to join a recovery event around the community to highlight the significance of helping people in need of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services, while also celebrating the accomplishments of individuals in recovery.

WHO: [Participants]

WHEN: [Date and Time]

WHERE: [Address of Event]

CONTACT: [Name and Phone Number of Primary Contact for Event]

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Adapt as needed for the event by modifying the type of event, date, and local statistics as available.]

For Immediate Release

Contact: [Name of Person Who is Available to Answer Questions from the Media]

[Phone Number of Contact Person – Include Office and Cell Numbers]

[Email Address of Contact Person]

[Name of Official] Hosts Recovery Event to Raise Awareness of Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders Support Services in [City or State]

[City, State], [Date] – Mental and/or substance use disorders and the societal benefits of recovery for [City or State] must be addressed immediately, according to [Name of Local Official], who today recognized September as **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**. To promote the widespread national observance, [Name of Official] led a recovery event, which featured opening speakers and was intended to support people in recovery and draw attention to critical prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

In addition, a walk, attended by more than [Number of people who attended the walk] people, celebrated real-life examples of people in recovery.

“Today’s event emphasized that individuals in recovery and their support systems can be change agents in our communities,” stated [Name of Official]. “It is critical that people experiencing mental and/or substance use disorders receive the support they need. The reality is that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.”

[Replace the following paragraph with local statistics, if available.] In 2014, 43.6 million people aged 18 or older (18.1 percent of adults) had any mental illness according to the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an annual survey released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Opening speakers at the event described the impact of mental and/or substance use disorders on the community, and joined the crowd on the walk in downtown [City]. The event also featured the support of local businesses and organizations that recognize the value of seeking treatment and overcoming mental and/or substance use disorders.

“It is important that the momentum we’ve established at this event is carried over to tomorrow, and the next day, week, and year,” said [Name of Person]. “We all have the potential to make a difference and be visible, vocal and valuable to help spread the message that recovery is possible.”

Today’s event was part of **Recovery Month**, a national observance sponsored by SAMHSA, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The observance raises awareness of mental and/or substance use disorders, celebrates individuals in long-term recovery, and acknowledges the work of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

SAMPLE BACKGROUNDER

[Adapt as needed by including additional organization-specific information or information on the event].

National Recovery Month Media Fact Sheet

What is National Recovery Month?

National Recovery Month (Recovery Month) is an annual observance celebrated every September since 1989. In September, and throughout the year, **Recovery Month** spreads the message that –

- Behavioral health is essential to health.
- Treatment is effective.
- Prevention works.
- People recover.

Refer to the **Recovery Month** website, www.recoverymonth.gov, for additional information on the initiative.

Who sponsors Recovery Month?

Recovery Month is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. SAMHSA collaborates with approximately 200 **Recovery Month** Planning Partners who represent local, state, and national organizations dedicated to prevention, treatment, and recovery.

What is this year's Recovery Month theme?

This year's theme, "*Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!*" highlights the value of peer support by educating, mentoring and helping others. It invites individuals in recovery and their support systems to be active change agents in communities, and in civic and advocacy engagements.

What events occur during Recovery Month?

Every September—and throughout the year—hundreds of events occur to celebrate **Recovery Month**. These events, ranging from recovery walks and rallies to online web chats and group barbeques, encourage the following audiences to address the continued need for prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

- Active military and veterans
- Friends and family members
- Civic leaders
- High school-aged students
- Communities
- Justice system personnel
- College-aged students
- Policymakers
- Educators
- Prevention, treatment, and recovery organizations
- Employers
- Peer recovery
- Faith-based organizations
- Recovery community
- Faith leaders
- Social service organizations
- First responders
- Youth and young adults



Where can people find treatment for mental and/or substance use disorders?

Many treatment options exist. SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatments and Services webpage, www.samhsa.gov/treatment, helps people find mental and/or substance use disorder treatment facilities and programs across the country. SAMHSA's National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** or **1-800-487-4889 (TDD)**, provides 24-hour, free, and confidential information about mental and/or substance use disorders, and prevention, treatment, and recovery referrals in English and Spanish. Additionally, the "Treatment and Recovery Support Services" section in this toolkit provides an overview of support options.

Where can people learn more about the current mental and/or substance use disorder landscape?

Refer to the "Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders: Fast Facts" section in this toolkit for up-to-date statistics on the prevalence of mental and/or substance use disorders in the United States.

ISSUE RECOVERY MONTH PROCLAMATIONS

A proclamation is an official announcement that publicly recognizes an initiative, such as **Recovery Month**. Proclamations are typically signed and issued by federal officials, governors, state legislators, or other government officials at the local level.

The solicitation and gathering of proclamations from state, territory, city, or county entities in support of **Recovery Month** is another way to promote and raise awareness for behavioral health, and spread the message that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

Last year, 82 proclamations were signed to support **Recovery Month**, including one issued by President Barack Obama. For the past 15 years, the Executive Office of the President of the United States has supported the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (www.samhsa.gov), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (www.hhs.gov), by working to raise public awareness and support for those with behavioral health conditions, as well as their communities and families. The Presidential Proclamation recognizes the importance of prevention, treatment, and recovery across the country. Equally important are the hundreds of proclamations issued at the state, territory, and local levels each year.

The **Recovery Month** theme, “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!*” highlights the value of peer support by educating, mentoring, and helping others. It invites individuals in recovery and their support systems to be catalysts and active change-agents in communities, and in civic and advocacy engagements. To differentiate your proclamation from previous years, we recommend you create a proclamation that highlights this year’s theme.

The information below includes tips to help draft and promote a **Recovery Month** proclamation.

CONTACT PUBLIC OFFICIALS...

Before drafting a proclamation to designate September as **Recovery Month** in your area, you may wish to research local officials to gauge their interests and beliefs about prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. You will want to engage someone who is passionate about this issue, if possible, or try to generate passion for the issue as a result of your outreach. Remember that many public officials can issue a proclamation, including:

- Governors
- Senators and Representatives

- Mayors
- City council members
- State legislators
- County managers
- Tribal nation leaders

Since many legislatures and city governments are not in session during the summer months, try to contact public officials at least three months in advance of **Recovery Month**. Write a letter or send an email to initiate correspondence with an official’s communications office, and follow up with a phone call. Include a link to www.recoverymonth.gov in your correspondence. During the initial conversation, explain the **Recovery Month** observance, detail scheduled local activities, and discuss the importance of their support for this annual event. If the official’s office is unfamiliar with the proclamation process, explain that it’s a simple way for the government to recognize the importance of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for mental and/or substance use disorders—and that it can encourage those in need to seek help.

Once the office confirms that the official might support **Recovery Month** and issue a proclamation, it’s time to start writing.

DECIDE ON A STYLE...

There are two styles of proclamation writing: traditional and modern. While these two styles differ in format, they can both generate awareness of **Recovery Month**.

Traditional proclamations begin with a series of statements starting with the words “whereas,” which detail the current state of affairs and suggest the reasoning behind the proclamation. Each clause notes the problems or issues being addressed and is followed by a concluding phrase beginning with “therefore,” which specifically requests the support or action needed.

Modern proclamations are written in a letter format (see an example of a Presidential Proclamation at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/proclamations>). They highlight the same points as a traditional proclamation, but are written as statements.

Samples of both formats are included at the end of this document. Examples of signed and issued proclamations can be viewed on the **Recovery Month** website at www.recoverymonth.gov under the “Proclamations” section.

DEVELOP A PROCLAMATION...

Once you are familiar with the different proclamation styles, use the following checklist when drafting a proclamation and working to gain public support for **Recovery Month**.

- Determine the official's preferred writing style (traditional or modern).
- Offer to draft the proclamation.
- Refer to the examples at the end of this document to help draft the proclamation.
- Insert local information or statistics that will resonate with community members (see examples in the "Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders: Fast Facts" section in this toolkit).
- Submit the proclamation to the official's office early and allow time for the official to review and sign the proclamation.
- Follow up frequently to check the status of the proclamation.
- Display copies of the proclamation in public places once it has been signed.
- Post the proclamation on the **Recovery Month** website, Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RecoveryMonth), and Twitter account (twitter.com/recoverymonth).

PERSONALIZE...

You can personalize the proclamation for your community and include important messages about recovery. Consider including or consulting the following resources about treatment and recovery services.

- **SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health and other data from SAMHSA** (www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh)
- **SAMHSA's National Survey on Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/substance-abuse-facilities-data-nssats)
- **SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set** (www.samhsa.gov/data/client-level-data-teds)
- **SAMHSA's Drug Abuse Warning Network** (www.samhsa.gov/data/emergency-department-data-dawn)
- **SAMHSA's Mental Health Facilities Data (NMHSS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/mental-health-facilities-data-nmhss)
- **SAMHSA's Recovery and Recovery Support Webpage** (www.samhsa.gov/recovery)

- **SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatments and Services Webpage:** (www.samhsa.gov/treatment)

PUBLICIZE...

Publicizing the proclamation will bring more attention to **Recovery Month** and generate momentum for the national observance in your community. Visit local businesses, health clubs, libraries, hotel lobbies, schools, college campuses, treatment and recovery centers, community mental health centers, and government buildings to see if they allow you to display copies of proclamations and other **Recovery Month** resources. If permitted, display a **Recovery Month** poster to garner additional attention and increase interest.

To create additional publicity, arrange a press conference or town-hall meeting and have local officials sign or present the proclamation. This event can be accompanied by a roundtable discussion on issues related to mental and/or substance use disorders. Ideas for panelists include treatment and service providers, families affected by mental and/or substance use disorders, young adults affected by these disorders, and other individuals already in recovery. For information on how to plan a **Recovery Month** event, refer to the "Promote **Recovery Month** with Events" section in this toolkit.

Lastly, arrange for a proclamation to be featured in a local publication to increase awareness. Distribute electronic copies of the document to the local or metro desks of local newspapers, along with a press release to announce the signing of the **Recovery Month** proclamation. For tips on how to write an effective press release, refer to the "Press Materials for Your **Recovery Month** Event" section in this toolkit.

SHARE...

Post a copy of the proclamation on the **Recovery Month** website (www.recoverymonth.gov) and send it electronically to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov or in hard copy to:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration
ATTN: Consumer Affairs/**Recovery Month**
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
5600 Fishers Lane
13E33-B
Rockville, MD 20857

Be sure to share it on your social media channels!

Inclusion of websites and event examples in this document and on the **Recovery Month** website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

SAMPLE PROCLAMATION 1: TRADITIONAL FORMAT

WHEREAS, behavioral health is an essential part of health and one's overall wellness; and

WHEREAS, prevention of mental and/or substance use disorders works, treatment is effective, and people recover in our area and around the nation; and

WHEREAS, preventing and overcoming mental and/or substance use disorders is essential to achieving healthy lifestyles, both physically and emotionally; and

WHEREAS, we must encourage relatives and friends of people with mental and/or substance use disorders to implement preventive measures, recognize the signs of a problem, and guide those in need to appropriate treatment and recovery support services; and

WHEREAS, an estimated [XX Thousand/Million] people in [City or State] are affected by these conditions; and

WHEREAS, to help more people achieve and sustain long-term recovery, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and [Name of State, City, County or Treatment Organization] invite all residents of [State/City/Town] to participate in **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I [Name and Title of Your Elected Official], by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of [City, State, or Locality], do hereby proclaim the month of September 2016 as

NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

In [City or State] and call upon the people of [City or State] to observe this month with appropriate programs, activities, and ceremonies to support this year's **Recovery Month**, *Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!*

In **Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this [Day of Month] day of [Month], in the year of our Lord two thousand sixteenth, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two-hundred and fortieth.

Signature

[Insert City/State or Other Official Seal]



SAMPLE PROCLAMATION 2: MODERN FORMAT

Mental and/or substance use disorders affect all communities nationwide, but with commitment and support, people with these disorders can achieve healthy lifestyles and lead rewarding lives in recovery. By seeking help, people who experience mental and/or substance use disorders can embark on a new path toward improved health and overall wellness. The focus of **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** this September is to celebrate their journey with the theme *Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!* **Recovery Month** spreads the message that behavioral health is essential to health and one's overall wellness, and that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

The impact of mental and/or substance use disorders is apparent in our local community, and an estimated **[XX Thousand/Million]** people in **[City or State]** are affected by these conditions. Through **Recovery Month**, people become more aware and able to recognize the signs of mental and/or substance use disorders, which can lead more people into needed treatment. Managing the effects of these conditions can help people achieve healthy lifestyles, both physically and emotionally.

The **Recovery Month** observance continues to work to improve the lives of those affected by mental and/or substance use disorders by raising awareness of these diseases and educating communities about the prevention, treatment, and recovery resources that are available. For the above reasons, I am asking the citizens of **[City or State]** to join me in celebrating this September as **National Recovery Month**.

I, **[Name and Title of Elected Official]**, do hereby proclaim the month of September 2016 as

NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

In **[City or State]** and call upon our community to observe this month with compelling programs and events that support this year's observance.

Signature

[Insert City/State or Other Official Seal]

RECOVERY MONTH PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Every year, public service announcements (PSAs) are created for **Recovery Month** to encourage individuals in need of treatment and recovery services to seek help. PSAs are unpaid advertisements that air on television and/or radio stations, as well as online, at no cost.

To support the 2016 **Recovery Month** campaign, SAMHSA created two radio and television PSAs (<http://www.recoverymonth.gov/promote/public-service-announcements>) in English and Spanish. The spots reflect this year's **Recovery Month** theme, "*Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!*" as well as advertise SAMHSA's National Helpline. They highlight the message that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover from mental and/or substance use disorders.

These PSAs can be used year-round to promote prevention, treatment, and recovery. At the end of each PSA, SAMHSA's National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**, or **1-800-487-4889 (TDD)**, is highlighted. This toll-free number, available in English or Spanish, provides 24-hour, confidential information about mental and/or substance use disorders and prevention, treatment, and recovery referrals. All **Recovery Month** PSAs are freely available for public use without permission from, or charge by, HHS or SAMHSA.

CUSTOMIZE...

Each year, **Recovery Month** PSAs are distributed to television and radio stations nationwide. To maximize their circulation, these pre-recorded PSAs are available in 30-, 20-, and 15-second versions. Additionally, "open-ended" versions are available to add your local information to personalize the spots. If possible, work with a local production company to insert supplementary information, such as a website, phone number, or logo. Otherwise, you can promote them "as is."

If stations are unable to play the PSAs during September, remind them these PSAs can be played year-round. If local television or radio stations do not have the 2016 PSAs, suggest emailing recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov to receive a copy. The PSAs are also available online in the Video, Radio, and PSA section of the **Recovery Month** website at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov/promote/public-service-announcements>

USE SCRIPTS...

At the end of this document are one 30-second and one 15-second radio PSA script examples for radio hosts to read "live" on the air. These scripts can be easily tailored to promote a **Recovery Month** event in the local community. When customizing the live-read scripts to promote an event, keep in mind the following checklist.

- Include only crucial event details to limit the scripts to the allotted time.
- Refer viewers and listeners to a website or phone number for more information.
- Weave in local statistics or information about the prevalence of mental and/or substance use disorders that resonate with the local community.
- Ask radio stations if their most popular radio personalities or a community leader who may be visiting the station can help promote the PSAs by reading them live.

DISTRIBUTE SCRIPTS...

Distribute the live-read PSA scripts to local radio stations to promote an event or the **Recovery Month** campaign in September. Before reaching out to radio stations, identify which stations are most appropriate for the target audience, considering demographic data such as age, gender, race, and location. After selecting your top choices, contact these radio stations to determine if they are interested in receiving the live-read scripts. Also, ask for a specific person who handles these requests, such as a PSA director. When sending PSAs to local stations, it's important to include a cover letter, explaining the importance of the event and the **Recovery Month** campaign. Be sure to include contact information in case stations have questions. Refer to the "Work with the Media" section in this toolkit for a customizable pitch letter, and tailor it for use with PSA directors.



PROMOTE PRE-RECORDED PSAS...

Stress to radio and television stations the importance of these PSAs and how they motivate people in need to seek help by spreading the message that recovery from mental and/or substance use disorders is possible. Start by writing down bullet points or creating a script to use when calling television and radio stations to explain the **Recovery Month** PSAs in detail.

To spread the word online, email the PSAs to **Recovery Month** supporters. Ask them to forward the pitch email, along with the PSA spots, to anyone who may find them useful. Be sure to include your contact information and an explanation of why the PSAs are important. If the supporters you contact have a website, they can embed the PSAs from the **Recovery Month** website (www.recoverymonth.gov), Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RecoveryMonth), and YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/recoverymonth). Typically, an “embed code” link is included near the video, which enables copying and pasting the video to other websites. For questions regarding embedding **Recovery Month** PSAs, email recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov for assistance.

If you host a **Recovery Month** event, you can play the PSAs during the event to enhance the message. Set up a television and play the PSAs on repeat, or display them on a big screen with loudspeakers. For additional information on how to plan a successful **Recovery Month** event, refer to the “Promote **Recovery Month** with Events” section in this toolkit.

Inclusion of websites and resources in this document and on the **Recovery Month** website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

PERSONALIZE...

Below are resources to help strengthen your message and convey the importance of recovery to a station’s listeners.

- **SAMHSA’s Recovery and Recovery Support Webpage** (www.samhsa.gov/recovery)
- **SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health** (www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh)
- **SAMHSA’s National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/substance-abuse-facilities-data-nssats)
- **SAMHSA’s Treatment Episode Data Set** (www.samhsa.gov/data/client-level-data-teds)
- **SAMHSA’S Drug Abuse Warning Network** (www.samhsa.gov/data/emergency-department-data-dawn)
- **SAMHSA’s Mental Health Facilities Data (NMHSS)** (www.samhsa.gov/data/mental-health-facilities-data-nmhss)
- **SAMHSA’s Behavioral Health Treatments and Services Webpage** (www.samhsa.gov/treatment)

For more information on **Recovery Month** and services available, please refer to the “Treatment and Recovery Support Services” section of this toolkit.

2016 LIVE-READ RADIO PSA SCRIPTS

:30 SECOND

Mental and/or substance use disorders affect millions of Americans. By sharing their stories of recovery, individuals, families, and communities can help encourage public awareness and inspire others.

If you or someone you know is struggling with a mental and/or substance use disorder, call 1-800-662-HELP for treatment referral **[or replace this number with a local treatment and service provider's]** or visit **www.recoverymonth.gov** for information on prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

You can help yourself or someone you love take the first step toward recovery.

Celebrate ***National Recovery Month***, and spread the message that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

:15 SECOND

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